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*IDFG is rewriting the
Bighorn Sheep
Management Plan. We
want your feedback so
keep an eye out for
opportunities to
comment.*



Upper Snake Region Wildlife Newsletter ~ Winter 2007-2008 ~



Issue 2

May 2008

Welcome.....to the annual Regional Wildlife Newsletter. We've put together this brief report highlighting many of the activities and accomplishments from the winter of 2007-2008. The Upper Snake Region has abundant wildlife resources that provide for a wide array of wildlife based recreation such as hunting, trapping and wildlife watching. One of the goals of the IDFG is to improve public understanding and involvement in Fish and Wildlife Management. We hope this summary helps achieve that goal, and invite you to contact us at any time for further information or to share your comments.

Big Game Season Changes

Change is the important word here. All wildlife populations increase or decrease from one year to the next. These changes come about for many reasons. Changes in weather, habitat, hunting seasons, and predators all play an important role in wildlife population management.

As wildlife biologists, we collect information on habitat conditions, survey wildlife populations, monitor survival rates, keep track of hunter harvest, and watch the weather. We use all this information to help develop hunting season proposals. The proposals are then taken out to the public to gather their thoughts and more times than not, the proposals get modified in some fashion based on public input. The final proposals are taken to the IDFG Commission and the seasons are set for the next year.

The following are some of the changes made to deer and elk hunting season opportunities in the Upper Snake Region. Be sure to check out the 2008 proclamation to see all the rule changes.

Mule Deer

After citizens and sportsman voiced their concerns about human safety issues, IDFG changed the general deer season in Unit 63 to short range weapons only. Elk hunting will still remain any weapon because the elk tend to spend more of the hunting season farther away from homes and agricultural fields.

With the completion of a new statewide mule deer management plan, more emphasis has been placed on providing quality hunting opportunities. The Upper Snake Region has had a history of providing diverse hunting opportunities including quality hunts, so there were few changes made in the Upper Snake. We did add one new hunt in Unit 63A and modified

a few other hunts in an attempt to increase hunter satisfaction.

Elk

Each elk zone in the state is flown approximately every 4 years to determine the overall population size and bull:cow:calf ratios. When populations are above management plan objectives, additional opportunity can be provided to sportsmen. When populations are below objective, permit levels and or season lengths are reduced. In between surveys, biologists continue to monitor hunter success and survival information to adjust permit numbers.

Pioneer Zone

An elk survey was conducted in the Pioneer Zone this past winter. Results from the survey showed a decrease in elk numbers in the zone even though hunter success and % 6 points in the harvest had not decreased significantly since the last survey. However, numbers are below management plan objectives so a reduction in bull and cow permits was instituted for 2008.

Island Park Zone

This zone was flown during the winter of 2005. Numbers had fallen below population objectives. Adjustments in permits levels and season lengths were made. Since that time, hunter success and % 6 points in the harvest have continued to decline so you will see another reduction in permits this year. This zone will be flown again in 2010.

Whether you are hunting in the Upper Snake or some other region in the state this fall, please be sure to read the 2008 proclamation carefully for all rule changes and don't hesitate to call us if you have any questions. Good luck and good hunting this fall!

Status of Wolf Management in Idaho

On March 28th, 2008, gray wolves in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming were effectively removed from the federal endangered species list. Also on this day, Idaho Fish and Game assumed full management authority for wolves in Idaho. At the time of delisting, there were an estimated 732 wolves in Idaho, with at least three packs in the Upper Snake region (Biscuit Basin, Bishop Mountain, Fall Creek) and a fourth pack sharing its territory between our region and Yellowstone National Park (Bechler).

Wolves are now considered a big game species in Idaho, and as such, IDFG personnel are currently developing wolf hunting seasons. There will be regional open houses in early May to gather public input on wolf seasons. There will also

be opportunity to submit your input online at the IDFG website. This public input, along with IDFG staff recommendations, will be considered by the IDFG Commission when they set wolf seasons at their May 21-23 meeting in Twin Falls. If all goes smoothly, regulation brochures should be available in July for the 2008 wolf season. Starting in 2009, wolves will be included in the regular big game regulations brochure.

Upper Snake Region staff continue to monitor wolves in the region and public reporting of wolf sightings is an important part of our monitoring. Please help us by reporting wolf observations online at http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf_report or by contacting the Upper Snake regional office at (208) 525-7290.



Moose

"I have a moose in my back yard." The front office staff has lost count of the number of phone calls we have received this winter. Eastern Idaho once again experienced a good old fashioned winter this year which was difficult for most species of wildlife, including moose.

So what happens when the "I have a moose in my back yard" phone call comes in? Our first response is to direct one of our staff to visit the area and determine what actions should be taken. If the moose can be persuaded to leave the area, that is our first choice. If all else fails we can use immobilization drugs to sedate the moose and relocate it. We take this measure very seriously. These drugs are expensive, can be dangerous to humans, and some moose do not respond well to chemical immobilization and relocation.

When drugs are used, each moose is given a numbered ear tag. The number allows us to keep track of each moose we handle. If you harvest an ear-tagged moose call the phone number on the tag or the Upper Snake Regional Office.

Moose are very large, temperamental animals. Respect their space and call your local Fish and Game office if you are having moose problems.



IDFG Continues the Mule Deer and Elk Competition Study at Tex Creek

Idaho Fish and Game continues to study mule deer and elk interactions on the Tex Creek Wildlife Management area. Idaho Fish and Game partnered with Idaho State University, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, and the Southeast Idaho Mule Deer Foundation last year to begin studying the effects of elk on wintering mule deer.

For the second year Fish and Game personnel captured and radio-collared mule deer and elk across the Tex Creek winter range in January. These animals and other previously collared mule deer and elk were monitored throughout the winter. The GPS (Global Positioning System) radio-collars will provide the research team with several locations per day and will provide insight to how much overlap there is between mule deer and elk on the winter range. Researchers will also collect information on the rate at which mule deer lose fat reserves, stress levels of mule deer, and survival of adult and juvenile mule deer to deter-



mine if elk are having a detrimental effect on mule deer during the winter.

The first winter of the project was characterized by very mild conditions and little interaction between mule deer and elk. This winter has provided a good contrast to the first year; deep snow pushed elk down to lower elevations early and held them there throughout the winter. Those conditions led to continual interaction between deer and elk across much of Tex Creek for most of the winter. While last year's mild conditions resulted in

high mule deer fawn survival and a slow depletion of fat reserves, this year was characterized by high fawn mortality and faster depletion of fat reserves for adult deer. Researchers will analyze the locations from elk GPS radio-collars later this year to determine if elk densities had an effect on stress levels, loss of body condition, and survival of mule deer.

Grizzly Bear Safety

It is the time of year that both grizzly and black bears are emerging from their winter dens in search of food. A portion of the grizzly bears that den in Yellowstone National Park and northwest Wyoming will travel to Idaho's Upper Snake region during spring-fall, mostly in the northern portion of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Although encounters with Grizzly Bears are relatively rare, below are a few tips that can help you prevent negative interactions with bears when living or recreating in grizzly bear country. Check with IDFG for additional information.

At your residence:

- Don't let garbage accumulate and use bear-proof garbage containers
- Don't leave food (human or animal), waste items (e.g., cooking grease), or other scented items (e.g., sunscreen, candles) in your yard or on your porch
- Clean grills and coolers and store them inside if possible
- Do not put out bird feeders during times of peak bear activity (March-November)
- Do not leave pets unattended outside

While camping/hiking/hunting/fishing:

- Select a campsite away from berry patches, spawning streams, and trails and set your tent at least 100 yards from food storage and cooking areas
- Hang your food, garbage, game, and other odorous items at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet away from the nearest tree trunk or large branch or keep attractants in a hard-sided camper, vehicle, or bear resistant container
- Pack out your harvested game as soon as possible



- Wash your hands and change clothes after cooking
- Keep your tent completely free of odorous products
- Keep a flashlight in your tent and bear deterrent spray readily accessible at all times
- Travel in groups when possible, make noise while walking, and walk away (don't run) if you encounter a bear.

Whether living or recreating in grizzly bear country, it is a good idea to keep bear deterrent spray readily accessible. Bear deterrent spray is designed for close range self defense and is not effective as a repellent. For example, do not spray the outside of your tent in an attempt to repel bears. Bear deterrent spray that has dried on a surface loses its effectiveness as a deterrent and can actually become an odorous attractant.

Winter Feeding



The significant snowfall received this winter caused problems for both people and wildlife. Deep snow and cold temperatures caused many animals to concentrate near area roadways and residential areas, presenting a public safety problem. In order to com-

bat this concern, the Upper Snake Region Winter Feeding Advisory Committee recommended supplemental winter feeding of deer and elk in some areas. The Winter Feeding Advisory Committee is made up of local sportsmen and landowners representing various areas of the region. This committee has established criteria that provide guidance in making the recommendation to begin winter feeding. The criteria take into consideration things like animal body condition, snow depth, snow crusting, temperature, public safety, and wildlife disease threats. After considering all of these criteria, the Winter Feeding Advisory Committee recommended feeding deer at 13 sites and elk at 2 sites. Of these 15 feed sites, the basis for the recommendation was concern for public safety at 12 sites, wildlife disease at 2 sites, and excessive winter mortality at 1 site. Approximately 1,285 deer and 250 elk were fed during this effort. This tremendous undertaking would not have been possible without the many volunteers who donated many, many hours of their time and the use of their personal equipment. Thank you to all of the great people that made this winter's feeding effort possible.

Q&A: Protection of Livestock and Pets from Wolves

Since wolves are a new big game animal in Idaho, many people have questions about what they can do to protect their livestock and pets from wolves and the reporting process for incidents with wolves. If the following Q & A does not answer your questions completely, please contact the Upper Snake regional office (208-525-7290) or stop by the office and pick up a more detailed version of this Q & A.

Q: Is it legal to kill a wolf to protect my animals (livestock or domestic animal) from wolf depredation and what should I do if this happens (see Idaho Code 36-1107(b and c) for additional detail)?

A: It is legal for the livestock or domestic animal's owner, their employees or agents, and animal damage control personnel to lethally remove a wolf that is molesting or attacking livestock or domestic animals without obtaining a permit from IDFG. "Molesting" means the actions of a wolf are annoying, disturbing or persecuting, especially with hostile intent or injurious effect, or chasing, driving, flushing, worrying, following after or on the trail of, or stalking or lying in wait for, livestock or domestic animals. A taken wolf must be reported to the IDFG Director's office within 72 hours (additional reasonable time is allowed if access to the site is limited) and the wolf will become property of the state. If the wolf is taken by a wolf tag holder during a wolf hunting season, then wolf season regulations and reporting



requirements would apply. A permit must be obtained from the IDFG Director to remove a wolf that is not molesting or attacking livestock or domestic animals outside of the wolf hunting season. IDFG believes a person should be able to protect their private property including all domestic animals, but the Department is also obligated to assure the killing was legitimate. Therefore, it is in your best interest to immediately contact USDA Wildlife Services (1-866-487-3297) or the IDFG Upper Snake regional office (208-525-7290) and preserve all evidence that shows what happened. For example, limit access to the area, cover important evidence (like carcasses) with a tarp, and take pictures.



Q: If I find livestock or a domestic animal that I believe was killed by a wolf, what should I do?

A: Attempt to protect the evidence by photographing the carcass, the immediate area, tracks, etc. and place a tarp over the carcass. Limit disturbance to the site and immediately call either USDA Wildlife Services or the IDFG Upper Snake regional office. It is important to contact someone immediately to expedite the process and quickly gather the evidence at the site before it is disturbed or destroyed by weather.

Q: If I see a wolf on my property what can I do?

A: If a wolf is simply on your property, and is not molesting or attacking your livestock or domestic animals, it can not be killed under Idaho law. If a wolf is seen feeding on a carcass, but was not seen attacking or molesting, it can not be killed as the animal may have died of other causes. If you are concerned about your animals please contact IDFG or USDA Wildlife Services. We can help you monitor the situation and may be able to assist in preventing a potential problem.

Q: If the wolf has killed my livestock or caused a safety problem or property damage, but it is not caught molesting or attacking, can I still kill it?

A: If a wolf has recently killed or injured your legally present livestock or domestic animal, or has caused real or significant property damage, and/or shows a continued threat to property or human safety you can request a "kill" permit from the IDFG Director. You should contact IDFG if you are having problems with wildlife and a representative will review alternatives to reduce or eliminate potential problems. Hunting, including the use of depredation hunts, will be considered a preferred alternative.

Mule Deer Monitoring

Early winter snow pack and good weather conditions resulted in a productive deer capture season for the IDFG Upper Snake Region. Between December 17 and January 14, Fish and Game employees and local volunteers captured and radio collared 141 mule deer does and fawns in 5 winter ranges in the region. In addition to the traditional study areas around Heise, Tex Creek WMA, Sand Creek WMA, and Reno Point, mule deer were captured and radioed for the first time in and around Teton Canyon. Information gathered from radio-marked deer in the Teton Canyon area will be critical to resource managers and biologists as they address potential land use changes in this region.

Intensive fawn monitoring by IDFG began in 1998 with the objective of determining how geographic location, yearly climatic variation, sex, and early winter condition contribute to over-winter survival rates.



Mule deer are captured by helicopter drive netting or net gunning. Deer are aged, ear-tagged and fitted with either a permanent or temporary radio collar. After release, all radioed deer are located within one week to rule out the possibility of capture related mortality. Once all deer are detected after capture, monitoring by wildlife technicians via ground or aerial telemetry is conducted to determine monthly survival rates. Deer found on mortality signal are located and

necropsied in the field to determine the cause of death. Monitor-



ing of fawns continues until May 15. After this date, all fawns found alive are assumed to have survived the winter and their temporary collars will wear off before the next fall. Collared mule deer will continue to be monitored at various times throughout the year to determine migration routes, summer habitat use, and survival.

Preliminary results suggest that winter conditions have negatively impacted fawn survival on at least some wintering grounds. As of mid-April region-wide fawn survival was 33%, varying from 60% at Reno Point to 17% at Heise. Bone marrow condition of necropsied fawns indicates that malnutrition was at least a factor in most fawn mortalities so far this year. Region wide doe survival through mid-April was still 95%.

So this hunting season, you probably won't see a large number of yearling bucks on the hill, but mule deer populations should rebound quickly, just like they did after the winter of 2005-06 which had similar fawn survival rates.

2007-2008 Winter Depredations

The winter of 2007-2008 was not the worst on record, but certainly provided plenty of challenges for the Upper Snake Region wildlife. Winter snowfall totals were above average across the region. These conditions lead to a dramatic increase in depredation problems when compared to the last few years. Some of the issues included haystack depredation, public safety concerns, and brucellosis transmission concerns. The methods used to address these problems can be different with each situation. IDFG worked with area landowners to provide materials to prevent depredations from occurring. In some cases, however, it is not practical to place a fence between the wildlife and the food source. In these instances, there are a variety of methods that can be used. These methods include non-lethal hazing, the use of repellants, or depredation hunts. There are pros and cons to each of these methods. The method used depends on many factors, including the species of animal involved, the location of the depredation, and the proximity of neighbors. Depredation hunts are only used in areas where hunting will not pose a threat to public safety and where the resulting movement of animals will not create new problems with other landowners. During the winter of 2007-2008, IDFG provided depredation prevention materials to 47 landowners and assisted with hazing on numerous occasions.




The Upper Snake Region is known for its passionate hunters, active conservation groups and non-governmental organizations. In addition, we are fortunate to have an outstanding group of scientists in our partner agencies and Universities that help IDFG to accomplish its mission. We are proud of our efforts and accomplishments over the past year, but we know full well that we could accomplish very little without the cooperation and support from the many groups and individuals who help us. In addition to the countless hunters who've simply expressed support for what we do, we'd like to thank:

IDFG Volunteers
Mule Deer Foundation
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Safari Club International
Wild Turkey Federation
Ducks Unlimited
Pheasants Forever
Foundation for North American Wild Sheep
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife
Teton Regional Land Trust
The Nature Conservancy
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Forest Service
Bureau of Land Management
Fish and Wildlife Service
Terry Bowyer (ISU)
John Kie (ISU)

Access Yes!

The IDFG Access Yes! program compensates landowners for sportsmen's access to or across their private lands. The program has a statewide goal of opening up 1 million acres of private land to public sporting access. Here in the Upper Snake Region, there are currently 21,546 acres of private lands enrolled in the program with access to an additional 9,440 acres of public land through these private lands. The funding used to compensate these landowners comes mainly from the sale of Super Hunt Tag applications. So, check out the great Super Hunt Tag hunting opportunities that support this program. If you have not hunted the region's Access Yes! lands go to the IDFG website for more information on a variety of hunting opportunities on these properties.



Access Yes!

Sportsman Access Area

This property has been designated accessible to sportsmen by:

(Land owner)

In cooperation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
Please respect the owners' access requirements:

TYPES OF ACCESS TO BE ALLOWED

☐ Sportsmen numbers are unlimited.
☐ Sportsmen numbers are limited and/or dates.
☐ An entrance is restricted. Only _____ sportsmen allowed
on the _____ per week (include day, M, Tu, We, Th, F, Sa, Su)
The offered lands are only to be open to the public
from _____ to _____

☐ Landowner notification required. Phone: _____
☐ Vehicle use only on existing roads and trails.
☐ No vehicle use, walk-in or horse access only.

☐ Vehicle use only for retrieving game.
☐ No overnight camping.
☐ No overnight hunting.
☐ No open fire.
☐ Only specified types of fishing.
☐ Available for public use only during specified hours.

WILDLIFE OPPORTUNITIES

☐ Big Game ☐ Other: _____
☐ Small Game ☐ _____
☐ Fish ☐ _____
☐ Waterfowl ☐ _____

EXCEPTIONS

Brucellosis Monitoring

Idaho has regained its "Brucellosis Free" status after losing it almost 2 years ago. Idaho is still on probation, and IDFG and ISDA once again worked extensively with ranchers this winter to ensure that Idaho maintained "Brucellosis Free" status. IDFG and ISDA spent the winter monitoring and hazing elk, and panning haystacks in order to keep elk from damaging property and congregating near cattle.

In November of 2007, elk were monitored as they left the high country and migrated to their wintering ranges. Panels were used to fence off haystacks in order to deter elk from congregating unnaturally around a food source and from coming too close to cattle. As the winter progressed and the snow deepened, elk began to look for additional food sources. By early January, elk had begun to mix with cattle in many areas so IDFG used hazing methods, snowmobiles, kill permits, and depredation hunts to prevent interactions. Although feeding elk is a last resort, with a recommendation from the Winter Feeding Committee, IDFG began using feed sites to bait elk away from problem areas.

IDFG and ISDA along with landowners, ranchers, volunteers, and sportsman worked together tirelessly in the 07'-08' winter to maintain separation between elk and cattle in an effort to keep Idaho's newly regained "Brucellosis Free" status.



The Upper Snake Regional Wildlife Staff looks forward to seeing you this year at our public meetings and hopefully in the field enjoying the great wildlife resources in the area.

Visit our website at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>